



Preserving Idaho's Public Lands

Idaho's abundance of parks, forests, and public lands makes our state a wonderful place to live, work, and play. As a long time Idahoan, I am deeply concerned about the preservation of our public lands, and as your representative in Congress, I have a special obligation to ensure that all legislation affecting these areas receives special scrutiny.

First and foremost, public lands were set aside for public use. Protecting the environment, which is a legitimate priority, should be balanced with the rights of private property owners and the freedom of Idahoans to utilize and enjoy the lands that belong to them. I strongly believe that Idahoans are more qualified than Washington bureaucrats to determine what is best for Idaho, and when there is a local consensus I have consistently supported passing laws to set aside public lands for the protection of ecosystems, habitats, and species.

The Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act (CIEDRA):

With this principle in mind, I have been working for nearly a decade with local ranchers, elected officials, recreationists, and other affected parties to address land use issues in the Boulder-White Clouds. Idahoans' access to these pristine areas has been in jeopardy for years because decades-long land management issues have not been resolved. To address these issues once and for all, I have introduced the Central Idaho Economic Development and Recreation Act (CIEDRA). CIEDRA moves us beyond the old debates of how to manage the Boulder-White Clouds and towards a more secure future for this rugged, beautiful, and productive heart of Idaho.

I am confident that with passage of CIEDRA, we can put to rest many long standing conflicts and move ahead to a stronger, more secure economy in Central Idaho. By ensuring that people can maintain their livelihoods and enjoy their favorite recreational activities, we have achieved a win-win for everyone.

The input of Idahoans, especially those who are directly impacted by this legislation, continues to be of utmost importance to me, and I appreciate you taking the time to share your comments with me. Please know that I will keep them in mind as CIEDRA moves through the legislative process. In addition, I have included maps, editorials, public testimony, and a breakdown of the facts and figures of this bill on my website at

<http://www.house.gov/simpson/ciedra.shtml>.

Funding for Public Land Agencies:

Nearly two-thirds of Idaho is public land, and as a life-long Idahoan I know the challenges that this creates for local governments. This is why I have been an outspoken advocate for programs like Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) and the Secure Rural Schools program, which provide funding to counties to make up for the fact that the federal government doesn't pay state and local taxes on the land it owns.

The federal government has the responsibility to be a good neighbor, rather than simply a burden on states and communities. As the Ranking Republican Member on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Interior and the Environment, which funds federal land management agencies like the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, I regularly work with these agencies to ensure that they are cooperating with citizens and local leaders in Idaho. In addition, I constantly work with my colleagues who are not from the West to educate them about the issues and challenges of living in a public land state.